

THE BOOK OF MORMON.

How the Original of the Latter Day Saints' Scriptures Was

WRITTEN BY REV. S. SPAULDING

In an Obscure Village in Western Pennsylvania.

THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST MANUSCRIPT

(WRITTEN FOR THE DISPATCH.)

The village of Amity, Washington county, is an insignificant and altogether unattractive place. No tradition of a thrilling or romantic character clings to the little town, but still like most other small places, its history contains one fact, which distinguishes it from other villages, and which at the same time has served to make it widely known. This fact is that Rev. Solomon Spaulding, the reputed author of the Mormon Bible lived, died and was buried there 78 years ago.

Amity is most conveniently reached over the Wayneburg and Washington Railroad, a narrow gauge line, which extends from Washington to Wayneburg, Greene county, and thence to the village of Amity. This is a clever little road, whose trains creep noisily up and down the sides of the hills of Washington and Greene counties and haul passengers and freight trains into the world, and carry on loads of the same sort back into Greene. The only passenger train on the road will deposit the traveler who seeks the tomb of Spaulding at Hackberry's station, two miles distant from the village of Amity, and then he can walk or take chances in getting to ride there on a farm wagon.

Amity lies two miles south of Washington, in the center of a rich agricultural district, and the people who make up the community contiguous to the village are intelligent and thrifty farmers, and hold quite different views from the village folk with respect to work.

A great many people go to Amity to see the last resting place of Solomon Spaulding, and about the first question which suggests itself to them is, why should a man of Spaulding's talents seek such a forlorn and desolate place for his last abode? It is one of the oldest towns in Washington county, and it still tenaciously clings to its primitive customs and usages. It seems never to have caught the spirit of improvement so noticeable in other small towns in Washington county. Perhaps the town is satisfied with the reputation it has gained because Solomon Spaulding was buried there, and will continue to hibernate during the remainder of its existence.

SPAUDING'S RESIDENCE. The location of the place is picturesque, but that is about all that can be said in its favor. It lies in a depression in a high ridge, and its dwellings all told only number twice a baker's dozen. The houses are old and the streets, some of them long, which, weather beaten and painful as they are, if they had, for 100 years, been the prey of the violent winter winds which sweep across the high hills. Its only street is the township road, which, an old resident informed me, in the spring of the year, becomes so deep in clay mud that it is impassable, and the citizens of the place can only visit the neighbors on that side of the street on which they happen to live.

The people, with a few exceptions, consist of the shillies class, who make up the residents of most small places, where there are no industries save those carried on by the blacksmith, shoemaker and the merchant, who keeps a small store in the village. The men lounge about in the single store, blacksmith shop or shoemaker shop, in the winter, and in warm weather they loaf upon the mounting block or empty store boxes, and while they wait with jack knives while they talk about the trivial affairs of the neighborhood. The women of the village scrub snuff as their mothers did, and gossip about each other just as all women do.

If a stranger appears in the village everybody runs to the front door or window to see him. If he stops in the place a half hour without making known his business someone will be sent to interview him as to his mission there. A gentleman with whom I talked about the Rev. Spaulding said that he passed through Amity once, and he believed that every man, woman and child in the place came out to see him. He said he inquired of an old fellow why the people stared at him, and the naïve replied that he was the first man who had appeared in the town for two months, and that the people were awfully glad to see him.

THE "BOOK OF MORMON." This village was the home of Solomon Spaulding, the author of a romance, entitled the "Manuscript Found," upon which the "Book of Mormon" is said to be founded; and the little burying ground which surrounds the old low eaved church, contains the moldering bones of the romance and preacher, who, it is alleged, was the unintentional creator of one of the most remarkable delusions the world has ever witnessed.

The grave of Spaulding is almost in the center of the church yard and is marked by a plain headstone of white marble. The stone was originally four feet high and 28 inches wide, but it had been chipped and clipped by souvenir hunters, until it is more than half gone, and a ragged, edged, round-topped stump of a stone is all that remains. A portion of the last two lines of the inscription on the tombstone is all that is visible. The entire inscription which was copied by Rev. Abner Jackson, is as follows:

IN MEMORY OF Solomon Spaulding, who departed this life, October 20, A. D. 1816. Aged 55 years. "Kind cherubs, guard the sleeping clay Until the great decision day, And saints complete in glory rise To share the triumph of the skies." Solomon Spaulding was of a vacillating disposition, and, although a man of talent, his life is a good illustration of the adage that a rolling stone gathers no moss. He was born in Ashford, Conn., in 1761; he was educated at the college of New Hampshire, and graduated from that institution in 1785. Three years later he entered the ministry of the Congregational church, and preached three or four years. On account of failing health he was dismissed, and after a few years' trial at stockbreeding, in which he lost considerable money, he again removed, in 1800, to Connecticut, Ashabula county, O. Here he became an iron manufacturer, and built a large blast furnace. In this business, as in his former ones, he failed, and as a consequence became largely involved in debt.

He continued to reside at Conneaut for three years, and while there his attention was drawn to the great number of Indian mounds and remains of fortifications in that vicinity. Being a man of literary tastes, and particularly fond of history, he conceived the project of writing a romance which would purport to account for the existence of the mound builders on this continent, and at the same time relate their history. This employment beguiled the tedious hours of his enforced leisure, and when he had completed the romance, the idea suggested itself that by the publication of the book sufficient profit would arise from the sales to enable him to discharge his indebtedness.

acters and incidents of the romance became subjects of general discussion, the outlines of the narrative were deeply impressed on the minds of the listeners, and the names of the prominent personages grew familiar to all.

At last, in 1812, with the fond hope that his dream might be converted into something substantial, he removed to Pittsburgh and carried the manuscript of his romance to the printing house of Mr. Patterson, father of Robert Patterson, of Pittsburgh, to make some arrangement for its publication. For some unknown reason, perhaps want of funds on the part of the author, or want of faith in its success on the part of the publisher, the book was never printed.

These continual reverses crushed out all hope of success in the heart of Mr. Spaulding, and weary of the hard struggle against adverse fate he removed to Amity in 1814 and concealed himself; and his disappointment from the world in that obscure village. Two years later, October 20, 1816, he died there.

All the accounts of the life of Solomon Spaulding agree in essential points; but what became of his manuscript is still somewhat of a mystery and probably always will be. The great regret is that it was not published by Mr. Patterson. If the reasonably well founded supposition that Spaulding's romance is the source of Joe Smith's alleged inspired revelations, there is a possibility that its publication might have been the means of preventing the organization, or of exposing the fanciful origin, of the great fraud of Mormonism. A great deal has been said and written by those anxious to prove that the "Book of Mormon" and Solomon Spaulding's "Manuscript Found" are one and the same, but the chain of testimony by which it is sought to connect the two books is weak in certain links, and the identity remains undetermined.

FALKIRK.

Patents to Pennsylvania.

Higdon & Higdon, patent lawyers, 95 Fifth ave., Pittsburgh, and St. Cloud building, opp. U. S. Patent Office, Washington, D. C., report the following patents granted during the week ending November 12, 1889: Pittsburgh—Dunlap, clamp for holding articles to be electro-plated; Thayer, sandrail; Wilcox, hobnail; Smith, tableware. Allegheny—Daellenbach, airbrake; Swindell et al, regenerative furnace.

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Spaulding's romance was a romance, and the names of the prominent personages grew familiar to all. At last, in 1812, with the fond hope that his dream might be converted into something substantial, he removed to Pittsburgh and carried the manuscript of his romance to the printing house of Mr. Patterson, father of Robert Patterson, of Pittsburgh, to make some arrangement for its publication. For some unknown reason, perhaps want of funds on the part of the author, or want of faith in its success on the part of the publisher, the book was never printed.

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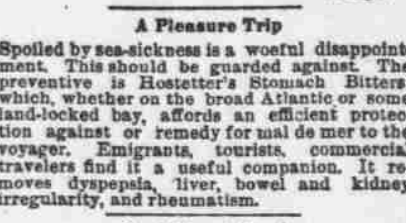
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